Latter Rain and Manifest Sons of God

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On February 12, 1948, a Pentecostal “revival” broke out in the Sharon Orphanage and Schools in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. The previous day, a female student had prophesied that a great worldwide revival was about to begin. There were alleged tongues, healings, prophecies, and many “fell under the spirit.”

The School was founded by Herrick Holt, pastor of the Church of the Foursquare Gospel in North Battleford, and he was joined in the fall of 1947 by George Hawtin and Percy Hunt, formerly pastors with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Hawtin and Hunt brought 70 students from the Bethel Bible Institute where they had formerly taught.
The leaders and students at Sharon were seeking after a restoration of end-time miracle power. Holt had been preaching that God was going to do a “new thing,” and some of the teachers had attended a William Branham crusade the previous fall in Vancouver, British Columbia, and had become convinced that an apostolic renewal was about to occur. They even had Branham lay hands on them. Branham was prophesying that the seventh age of the church was beginning and that this would prepare the way for the return of Christ.

They were also influenced by Franklin Hall’s

Atomic Power with God through Fasting and Prayer. Ernest Hawtin testified: “The truth of fasting was one great contributing factor to the revival. One year before this we had read Franklin Hall's book, entitled ‘Atomic Power With God Through Fasting and Prayer.’ ... The revival would never have been possible without the restoration of this great truth through our good brother Hall” (Richard Riss, *The*

Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-twentieth Century Evangelical Awakening, p.89). Franklin Hall had a “revival center” in San Diego, California, and taught that fasting and prayer are the means to the restoration of apostolic miracles. He taught a BODY-FELT experience whereby through extended fastings the “fire of the Holy Spirit” would eliminate sickness, tiredness, and even body odor, and would result in immortalization. The believer with the body-felt salvation would be able to travel instantly to any destination and his clothes would not wear out. Pentecostal historian David Harrell, Jr., notes that though Hall was somewhat isolated because of his doctrine, his book on fasting had a major impact on the Pentecostal movement and most of the healing evangelists used it (Harrell, *All Things Are Possible*, p. 81).

The Sharon movement focused on the restoration of apostolic miracles. They expected end-time apostles and prophets to rise up to lead the movement. There was an emphasis on the confession of sins to one another and the pronouncement of forgiveness in Jesus’ name. There was also an emphasis upon the imparting of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands, an experience that was influenced by J.E. Stile’s book

The Gift of the Holy Spirit. There was also a focus on “personal directive prophecy,” which became an instrument of control in the hands of some.

The “revival” influence spread rapidly during and after a Camp Meeting in July 1948, which thousands of people attended from Canada the United States.

The Sharon movement was disciplined by the Assemblies of God in 1949, not for the latter rain doctrine itself, but for what they considered to be excesses and abuses. They gave four reasons for rejecting the movement: (1) its emphasis upon present-day apostles and prophets, (2) the practice of confession, (3) the practice of bestowing spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands, and (4) the distortion of Scripture so as to arrive at conclusions not generally accepted by members of the Assemblies (“The Latter Rain Movement,”

Encyclopedia of American Religions, edited by Gordon Melton, 1996, p. 84). The Assemblies were also upset that they were losing churches and church members to the new movement.

MANIFEST SONS OF GOD

The Manifest Sons of God theology was associated with the New Order of Latter

Rain and the Sharon School. One of the proponents of it, George Warnock, had attended the July 1948 Camp Meeting and was hired on the staff of the school and church in 1949. In 1951 he published *The Feast of Tabernacles.* Prior to coming to Sharon, Warnock was the personal secretary to Ern Baxter, an associate of William Branham.

Some of the features of this theology are as follows:

* There will be a restoration of “the five-fold ministry” described in Eph. 4:11, including the offices of apostle and prophet. These will finally carry out the purpose of the church, which is to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

* Certain believers will become manifested as the sons of God and thus be perfected and immortalized. “These Manifest Sons of God would receive the ‘spiritual bodies’ mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15. They would become immortal, and receive a number of divine gifts, including the ability to change their physical appearance, to speak any language, to teleport from place to place, and to perform divine healings and other miracles. They would complete the Great Commission, spreading the gospel throughout the world, and at last usher in the millennial reign of Christ” (“Latter Rain Movement,”

Wikipedia).

* Joel’s Army will be composed of perfected Christians who will conquer and dominate the world preceding the return of Christ. This is a spiritualization of Joel’s prophecies.

* The Feast of Tabernacles is spiritualized and believed to describe the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth prior to Christ’s return. George Warnock, a proponent of Manifest Sons of God theology in the 1950s, taught this:

“[The Old Testament feasts] typify the whole Church Age, beginning with the death of Jesus on the cross, and consummating in ‘the manifestation of the Sons of God’--the ‘overcomers’ who will become perfected and step into immortality in order to establish the Kingdom of God on earth” (Warnock, *The Feast of Tabernacles*, 1951).

* Churches will unify and come under the authority of the apostles and prophets. “… the various Christian denominations would dissolve, and the true church would

coalesce into citywide churches under the leadership of the newly-restored apostles and prophets" ("Latter Rain Movement," *Wikipedia*).

A major proponent of this doctrine in the 1950s was

John Robert Stevens, a disciple of William Branham. Stevens was the "apostle" of the Church of the Living Word in Redondo Beach, California. Though discredited by many scandals (which has been the bane and plague of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement throughout its history), the Manifest Sons of God theology has been revived by various Pentecostal "prophets." PAUL CAIN, who was associated with William Branham in the 1950s and was aligned with the late John Wimber and the Vineyard movement in the 1990s, has taught many aspects of the Manifest Sons of God doctrine. He says: "I want you to know he's [Christ] coming to the Church before he comes for the Church. He's gonna perfect the Church so the Church can be the Image, be Him, and be his representative" (Cain, *My Father's House*, Nov. 1988, Grace Ministries, Kansas City).

"Not only will they not have diseases, they will also not die. They will have the kind of imperishable bodies that are talked about in the 15th chapter of Corinthians ... this army is invincible. If you have intimacy with God, they can't kill you (Paul Cain, cited in Jewel Van der Merwe, *Joel's Army*, 1990, p. 218).

Cain has frequently described visions he has had of stadiums filled with hundreds of thousands of people and of great miracles that will occur: of preachers levitating and standing in fixed poses for 24 hours, of people falling "under the power of God." He has said that he believes we are on the very threshold of these events and that Promise Keepers could be the forerunner to the last days miracle revival (Ed Tarkowski, "The Significance of Filled Stadiums," *The Christian Conscience*, Feb. 1996, www.netins.net/showcase/conscience/pk/pgn3_sd2.htm).Bill Hamon, who claims to be a prophet and an apostle, was involved in the New Order of the Latter Rain in the 1950s. Today he has a ministry called Christian International Network of Prophetic Ministries and has associations with many well-known Pentecostal-Charismatic and "Third Wave" leaders, including Oral Roberts, C. Peter Wagner, Cindy Jacobs, and the late Richard Shakarian. Consider some samples of Hamon's teaching: "The Holy Spirit is presently taking the Church through a process of transition, preparation and progression toward the Apostolic Movement and final restorational moves of God" (Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets, and the Coming Moves of God*, 1997, p. 9).

"The Earth and all of creation is waiting for THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS

OF GOD, the time when they will come into their maturity and immortalization... When the Church receives its full inheritance and redemption then creation will be redeemed from its cursed condition of decay, change and death... When the Church realizes its full sonship, its bodily redemption will cause a redemptive chain reaction throughout all of creation" (Bill Hamon

The Eternal Church, 1994, p. 385).Hamon and his fellow "prophets" believe the latter rain outpouring will result in a networking of the denominations that will produce the "renewed church" that takes dominion over the economy and other facets of this present world system. Hamon claims that Promise Keepers and the recent "outpourings" in Pensacola and Toronto are two of the movements that are leading up to the restoration of the miracle-working apostles (*Apostles, Prophets, and the Coming Moves of God*, pp. 9, 16).Rick Joyner, Ern Baxter, Francis Frangipane, Bill Britton, and Earl Paulk are other examples of Pentecostals who hold to Manifest Sons of God doctrine today. "God's people are going to start to exercise rule, and they're going to take dominion over the Power of Satan. They're going to bring diabolical princes down. The dark powers that hover over the Parliament buildings of the nations are going to be paralyzed by the corporate prayer of an authoritative community. As the rod of His strength goes out of Zion, He'll change legislation. He'll chase the devil off the face of God's earth, and God's people together, doing the will of God, will bring about God's purposes and Gods reign" (Ern Baxter, National Men's Shepherds Conference, Kansas City, Missouri, 1975).

"It was said of the Apostle Paul that he was turning the world upside down; it will be said of the apostles soon to be anointed that they have turned an upside down world right side up. Nations will tremble at the mention of their name" (Rick Joyner,

Restoration, May/June 1988, the Harvest).

"Angelic appearances will be common to the saints and a visible glory of the Lord will appear upon some for extended periods of time as power flows through them. There will be no plague, disease, or physical condition, including lost limbs, AIDS, poison gas, or radiation, which will resist the healing and miracle gifts working in the saints during this time" (Rick Joyner,

The Harvest, pp. 128-129).

"The change that is coming to the body of Christ is so profound that the world will

have a new definition of Christianity. ... Those who submit to Him in truth ... will be the most dangerous and powerful people on earth, and will be the greatest threat to the Antichrist spirit that now sits in the church as a substitute for Him" (Rick Joyner,

Morningstar Journal, Vol.2, No.1).

"I see the great year of Jubilee, when we shall pass through the veil into the very Presence of the fullness of God, to be filled with this fullness and go forth proclaiming liberty to all of creation. Romans 8 calls this the 'Manifestation of the Sons of God,' and says the whole creation is groaning and crying for this day. ... This is the ultimate anointing!" (Bill Britton,

Eagle Saints Arise).

"Before Jesus Himself returns, the last virgin Church shall become pregnant with the promise of God. Out of her travail, the Body of Christ shall come forth, raised to the full statute of its Head, the Lord Jesus. Corporately manifested in holiness, power and love, the Bride of Christ shall arise" (Francis Frangipane, "The Virgin Shall Be with Child,"

In the Presence of God, Now Wine Press, 1994).

"The last enemy to be conquered is death. Who will conquer it? A mature Church will come forth with the kind of authority and power that will be able to stand in the very face of Satan. When the Church reaches that level of maturity, God will be able to say, 'This generation of the Church does not need to die. She has reached a place of maturity. I will translate her because her maturity pleases Me'" (Earl Paulk,

The Wounded Body of Christ).

"We are on earth as extensions of God to finish the work He began. We are the essence of God, His on-going incarnation in the world" (Earl Paulk,

Held in the Heavens, 1985, p. 125).Further, even Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders who would reject some aspects of Manifest Sons of God theology, such as immortalization, still hold to other parts of it. They believe, for example, that the coming of Christ will be preceded by miracles that will be greater even than those of apostolic times and they hold to various forms of dominion theology. The leaders of the recent "laughing" revival--such as Rodney Howard-Browne, Karl Strader,

Stephen Hill, John Kilpatrick, and John Arnott--have taught doctrines similar to Manifest Sons of God. The Word-Faith teachers hold to the doctrine that Christians are little Christs that have the power to create things with their words, which is similar to Manifest Sons of God theology. The current “spiritual warfare” frenzy led by Charismatic and “Third-Wave” leaders such as Cindy Jacobs and Peter Wagner is similar to Manifest Sons of God theology in its claim to be able to take control over demonic powers even at a national and world level.

The theology of Kenneth Hagin, Sr., for example, is not far removed from Manifest Sons of God:

“Yes, sin, sickness and disease, spiritual death, poverty, and everything else that’s of the devil once ruled us. But now, bless God, we rule them--for this is the Day of Dominion!” (Kenneth Hagin, “Rejoice! This Is the Day Which the Lord Hath Made!” *The Word of Faith*, Sept. 1996).

“Every man who has been born again is an incarnation and Christianity is a miracle. The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth” (Kenneth Hagin, “The Incarnation,”

The Word of Faith, Dec. 1980, p.13).

In 1991 Word-Faith Pentecostal leader Morris Cerullo even produced a program and an audiotape entitled “The End time Manifestation of the Sons of God. Consider an excerpt: “You’re not looking at Morris Cerullo--you’re looking at God. You’re looking at Jesus. ... Today I am a Son of the all powerful almighty God of the Universe. His life flows through me. ... Jesus didn't come to teach you how to defend yourself... He taught us how to march out, go into his territory ... We DECLARE WAR. ... ‘I and the Father are ONE.’ How's that for taking the offensive!” (Cerullo, “The End time Manifestation of the Sons of God,” Morris Cerullo World Evangelism, 1991, tape 1).

Consider the following statement by Kenneth Copeland, who is one of the most prominent of the Pentecostal Word-Faith leaders: “Can you imagine somebody walking around with the power that Elisha and Elijah had and the power that Peter and Paul had--all at the same time! It’s about to happen!” (Copeland, *Believer’s Voice of Victory*, June 1994). At a Kenneth Copeland meeting in 1992 or 1993, Pentecostal evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne gave the following alleged prophecy:“This is the day, this is the hour, saith the Lord…that I’ll cause you to step over into the realm of the supernatural. For many have preached, and it’s

been prophesied of old and said there was a move coming. But Oh, it's even now and even at the door. For the drops of rain are beginning to fall to the glory of God" (Richard Riss, *A History of the Revival of 1992-1995*, www.grmi.org/renewal/Richard_Riss/history/copeland.html).

In 1990 John Wimber, having come under the influence of "prophet" Paul Cain, told a crowd in England: "There will be a time where even as in Acts 2, suddenly, as they were gathered in the midst of them, the Lord came and with the anointing beyond anything that has ever been given to man before. Something astounding, so marvelous that God has kept it as a mystery as it were, behind his back, and He is about to reveal it to the ages. He is about to reveal it. With the judgment of all mankind will come this incredible incarnational enduement of God's spirit and we will see the Elijah's … This end time army will be made of the Elijah's of the Lord God" (Wimber, Docklands, England, October 1990).

In his message "Hard to Receive," Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship pastor John Arnott makes this statement: "I'm telling you, this is not going to end with a tiny remnant getting rescued off the planet before they get exterminated by the Antichrist or something. The church is going out in glory, because God the Father has purposed it! And we're going to be victorious!"

Note the following statement by Rodney Howard-Browne: "The coming revival will be a culmination of all other revivals. There will be teaching, preaching, signs and wonders, healings, miracles, the glory of God, people being translated by the Spirit as Philip was in the Book of Acts, and people being raised from the dead. There will be awesome manifestations of the glory of God. Creative miracles will happen: Eyeballs will form, legs and arms will grow out, people will leap out of wheelchairs" (Howard-Browne, *The Coming Revival*, pp. 24, 25).

This is basically New Order of the Latter Rain Manifest Sons of God theology.

The strange theology is the product of an allegorical method of prophetic interpretation that results in dispensational confusion. The church replaces Israel and receives her promises. Events that occur only after Christ's return are interpreted as occurring prior to that. It is based on a faulty interpretation of Romans 8:18-24, among other passages. Manifest Sons of God proponents do not believe this refers to something that will occur

after Christ's return, *but before*.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”

The passage plainly says that in this present world the believer must endure suffering and the bondage of corruption and must live not by sight but by faith. The passage encourages the child of God to be patient through the troubles and imperfection he experiences in this present world, knowing that *WHEN CHRIST RETURNS* we will experience that which we long for: resurrection bodies, immortality, sinless perfection, the glory of God, and the transformation of the earth. Consider the following Scriptures:“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

Further, to claim that Christians are in any sense the incarnation of God is a blasphemous denial of the unique and eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ. Christians

are not God and are not the incarnation of God. They are redeemed of God and adopted as children through Jesus Christ, but there is an eternal and unfathomable distinction between the believer and God. Jesus is *"the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting"* (1 Tim. 6:15-16). In the last chapter of the Bible we see Jesus Christ sitting in the throne of God and His servants serving Him, not equal to Him (Rev. 22:3).

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